

Lexington Visitors Center Revised Programmatic Report

Prepared For
The Town of Lexington



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Lexington is known throughout the United States and internationally as a world-class tourism destination offering a unique and seamless range of services for tourists and residents alike. Visitors are encouraged to **Linger in Lexington**, thereby generating revenues for the town, attractions and businesses.*

Vision of the Tourism Committee

Lexington is in every history book written. Visitors from across the country and around the world learn about the Birthplace of American Liberty and want to see it firsthand. Should we allow them to come, view the Battle Green and leave or should we inspire them to Linger in Lexington and spend their money here? We need to give visitors more reasons to stay and that is why it imperative for us to begin the process of redesigning the Visitors Center which plays a critical role in fulfilling our economic mission.

This Programmatic Needs Assessment was originally written on January 20, 2012. The project was deferred last year for additional planning. In the last two years, invaluable and constructive feedback has been solicited from tourists, citizens, committees, local businesses, regional and State tourism partners, the Boards of the Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society, as well as from Town staff. These conversations were instrumental in revising this Programmatic Report.

The objective of the Visitors Center project is to maximize the economic development potential that tourism represents for Lexington. The tourism industry is the 3rd largest employer in Massachusetts and among the largest employers in Lexington, supporting some 500 jobs as a direct result of tourism spending. Together with Concord we are the 4th most visited destination statewide. This project is not solely about fixing a building that has outlived its useful life; it is also about providing opportunities to generate revenue through sources other than our taxpayers. It is the equivalent of rezoning a parcel of land to enable the development of projects that generate greater tax revenue.

Do we want to take full advantage of the economic potential of tourism in Lexington? In FY2011 & FY2012 hotel/meals tax totaled just over \$2 million of which \$630k represented new growth. That means that 31% of revenues in this category are new to Lexington in the last two years. Imagine what we could accomplish with the right tools. The State understands these economics and has been investing domestically to market Massachusetts. Furthermore, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) is a founding partner in Brand USA, which is the federal government's first ever coordinated global marketing initiative to attract foreign visitors. A modern Visitors Center designed to service the global 21st century travel market, is vital to generating additional revenue thereby providing tax relief to our residents and businesses.

We want the Visitors Center to make the best first impression. Whether it is cultural tourists from local communities or traditionally defined tourists travelling 50 miles or more, potential residents, family or friends visiting Lexington, or someone biking or walking on the commuter bikeway, the Visitors Center must be designed to meet the needs of these diverse users. The design must also recognize the important role the Chamber of Commerce plays in attracting and retaining businesses. The Visitors Center is often the first stop for prospective new employees; entrepreneurs seeking to open new businesses; large corporation considering a move to Lexington; and developers deciding whether to build or buy here. Enter the Visitors Center and ask yourself: Does the quality of that experience represent the excellence for which we strive? We only get one chance to make a first impression: Can we afford to wait?

Originally built in anticipation of the nation's bicentennial (1976), documented evidence demonstrates that over 100,000 people visit this building annually. Minuteman National Park received over one million visitors according to the National Park Service's data collection systems. This combined with our anecdotal evidence affirms that Lexington's visitation numbers are significantly higher than documented.



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How have we cared for this heavily used capital asset since it was built over forty years ago? Other than making the front door accessible and updating the bathrooms, the building is largely the same as it was then. Yet much has changed: national patriotism and the international demand for education about democracy has grown, the railway is now an active bikeway, the use of technology to research and plan their visits, distribute information, and make point of sales decisions about what they do once they arrive has exploded, and the need to capitalize on revenues outside the tax levy has become apparent. It is time to prepare this physical space to meet the needs of users in the 21st Century.

A major change in this report is that design options have intentionally been omitted. While they were a physical representation to demonstrate how programming might fit in the existing location, readers had a hard time believing that the public design process would engage all stakeholders and that the Department of Public Facilities would oversee the design and renovation project. The significant takeaway from those sketches is that in order to meet the program outlined, an addition and renovation are required. The cost associated with that option is approximately \$1.8 million. The projected economic impact of a well-designed Visitors Center justifies this investment. Based on new taxes and spending we believe that within 5-7 years, our investment will be repaid in tourism dollars.

The **Programmatic Goals** for the Visitors Center are:

1. Informing and orienting visitors to maximize their desire and ability to *Linger in Lexington*;
2. Creating and extending a welcoming environment for residents and visitors;
3. Promoting economic opportunities to generate income for the Town, attractions, local businesses and organizations, thereby benefitting Lexington taxpayers;
4. Educating our visitors, especially during the six months when our primary attractions are closed; and
5. Designing the facility to capitalize on the rapidly expanding international market.

In fulfillment of the goals, the following **programs** should be included in a renovated Visitors Center.

1. Customer service counter for welcoming and assisting multiple visitors simultaneously;
2. Orientation room for visitors, small groups, and larger tours, and for use during inclement weather;
3. Modern, sufficient, and easily accessible restrooms;
4. Redesigned rear entry from bikeway to attract guests;
5. Contemplative area for honoring Veterans with visual connection to exterior memorials;
6. Self-serve kiosk with materials in multiple languages;
7. Retail book and gift sales area;
8. Administrative space for Lexington's Chamber of Commerce; and
9. Indoor table(s) and vending machine area;

In the past two years preparing for this financial request, we have learned the following:

- There is broad consensus that this continuously utilized Town-owned facility needs work;
- The programmatic goals outlined in this report incorporates the collective ideas of the stakeholders;
- A public design process, guided by professional consultants, including an expert in interpretive planning, and our Facilities Department will inform the layout and flow of the site and facilitate improved visitor experiences.

Two years ago, the Tourism Committee identified the renovation of the Visitors Center as our capital priority. We began working with Town staff, boards and committees to request appropriate funding to begin this process. Funding was originally sought in the 2012 Town Meeting. While the need for an upgrade was acknowledged, some felt that the program needed to be further developed and the project was postponed. Over the past year we have engaged the stakeholders, reviewed our goals, researched, and refined the program. Now is the time for Lexington to fund the professional architectural design as the next step in that process.

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to better serve Lexington's visitors and maximize revenues from the tourism industry. This programmatic analysis should assist the Town in understanding the need, the market, similar projects, current conditions, future opportunities and the financial feasibility of the project. Best practices have been researched. With our historic public-private partnership with the Lexington Chamber of Commerce, our Visitors Center must recognize the important role the Chamber of Commerce plays in attracting and retaining businesses and in accommodating the needs of our commercial sector.

METHODS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Since July 2011, the Tourism Committee has been conducting this Programmatic Needs Assessment. Architectural standards for doing include:

1. Conduct a Gap Analysis:
 - Determine what the current situation is,
 - Outline the desired situation, and
 - Analyze what is the difference, or "gap," between current and desired conditions.
2. Identify Possible Solutions And Opportunities.
 - Review existing data and reports
 - Assess existing program and space allocation
 - Review surveys about visitor needs
 - Conduct interviews with stakeholders
 - Host a public meeting
 - Distribute a short survey via the internet to understand
3. Research best practices from comparable communities.

The steps taken to follow these industry standards for needs assessment began with a self-analysis of our Tourism program. Over several months the Tourism Committee created a Mission and Vision Statement which was voted on November 28, 2011 (see Appendix A).

Five public hearings were held over two tourism seasons to allow opportunity for stakeholders to consider the needs while observing actual practices in between the meetings. Three of those meetings were for the general public (see Appendices B, C and F). One meeting was focused on the perspective of local businesses (see Appendix D). In order to maximize participation in this meeting, the Lexington Chamber of Commerce, Lexington Retailers, and the Tourism Committee sent the invitation to Lexington businesses. One of the meetings was held between the Board of Directors of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce, the Lexington Historical Society, and the Tourism Committee (see Appendix E). This meeting was particularly instructive as it demonstrated the amount of misinformation that has circulated amongst the members of the respective organizations. It was a constructive meeting that opened a dialogue that we plan to continue independent of this project.

Best practice research was conducted over the internet, by interviewing colleagues in the industry, and by attending educational seminars and programs. Several members of the Tourism Committee participated in MOTT's Tourism U as well as regional conferences.



VISITORS SERVICES

Technology has changed the ways in which visitors receive and utilize travel information. Through our regional tourism bureau we know that 90% of visitors self-book their trips via the internet. While the internet may bring people to Lexington, that is not what determines how much time, and therefore money they will spend in town. It is those one-on-one interactions that take place at the counter that remain the key to increasing revenues: The conversations, the experience, the educational teasers, brochures and written materials which determine whether visitors see the Battle Green and leave, spend an hour, all day, or even stay for an overnight or two. Some visits are planned, but many are on the spot decisions, and a direct result of the Visitors Center staff and our Liberty Ride and Battle Green Guide guidance.

The importance of these personal connections, and the space and tools to do so has been a focus of our tourism efforts. For the past six years in late April, the Tourism Committee has provided training for all those who interact with visitors. At those annual sessions, a packet of information is provided to the guides that include new and existing programs, brochures for all attractions, the National Park Service Magazine, calendar details for Revolutionary Revelry and how to access other event information, direct phone numbers, and hours/dates of operation for all Lexington/Concord sites. A representative of each organization speaks about what they are hoping to emphasize for the season. New and returning guides are given an Ambassador Pass as they are required to visit each site so they are experts on all Lexington has to offer. A theme is discussed by a speaker that reminds people of what world-class service means. Themes such as the Disney Way, What a Smile means, Gracie's Way and others have improved visitors services. Initially these meetings focused on actual tour guides. However, over the years we have broadened it to include hotel front desk staff, police officers, the parking lot attendants, and others. They too influence how a guest feels about their Lexington visit.

Word-of-mouth continues to be a strong reason why people chose where to visit. It is therefore important that our visitors services are state of the art. The internet has multiplied the effect of the experience. If a good experience, that will be known. However, negative comments on sites like TripAdvisor and Google Places, and Yahoo travel are magnified and take tremendous efforts to undo. We need to make sure that the things we can control, such as the condition of the physical building and the services we offer, reflect the excellence that Lexington values so that the people coming will want to take full advantage of all we have to offer.

Who uses the Center has also evolved. Residents come to find out where to eat, shop, or entertain their family and friends. Businesses bring clients and potential employees to the Center to impress them with our history. They also receive assistance in determining whether to locate or grow in Lexington. A growing number of tourists are coming with the intent of spending time at our attractions. Improvements in transportation options have encouraged visitors from further away to travel to Lexington. Today's visitors come from around the country and the world. Our displays need to respond with translated exhibits, and technology to deliver visitor information in multiple languages.

The international appeal is in part fueled by the events of September 11, 2001 which renewed a sense of patriotism and appreciation of freedom and democracy. Europe sends a large number of visitors due to the connections of England and France to the American Revolution. Marketing opportunities for Massachusetts include Japan and China. Recently opened direct flights from Boston to Tokyo have fueled market growth from Japanese tourists. China has a well-educated, strong upper middle-class population. Due to years of government control of one baby per couple, generations of family wealth is now in the hands of a single couple. The Chinese have money to spend and they choose to do so increasingly in Massachusetts.



Massachusetts is a founding partner in Brand USA which is the first federal program to target the international market in a unified way. Through their educational program “Tourism U” we have learned why they are targeting the international market. International visitors spend 3 times as much as domestic visitors. Their average stay is three weeks which is longer than national visitors, translating to more dollars. Important to Massachusetts is that their visit is not dependent on weather. Typically they seek an educational based experience. Massachusetts, with its history and strong academic institutions is a favorite destination. Once they book, they come, and international visitors look at the calendar as a 12 month opportunity, not a seasonal six month window. An important component of attracting international visitors is having the physical space to respond to cultural norms of international visitors. The building was built for national visitors, with little consideration for the expectations of international travelers. Yet it is our international neighbors who seek to understand the power of democracy and therefore travel to Massachusetts. Our world is getting smaller; our visitors are more savvy, and their needs evolving. If we are going to reach our vision of being known internationally as a world-class tourism destination, then the first impression our international guests should have in the building is one that reflects a multi-cultural experience.

Since its formation in the mid-1990s, initially under the leadership of Betty Eddison, the Town’s Tourism Committee has partnered with the Chamber to understand visitor needs and to provide the infrastructure to support it. Based on the foundation of information gathered from local and state resources, visitors’ services should include: customer service counter space for welcoming and assisting customers, large enough to spread out maps, interpretative services to provide an overview of our history; orientation that sparks the interest of visitors to go into the community and patronize our cultural, historic and business resources; retail sales which serve as both a remembrance of the trip, but an advertising tool for Lexington; and modern, clean, and accessible bathrooms in sufficient quantity to reflect the use.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, Lexington has made a concerted effort to become more business friendly. In doing so, the Town has benefited by the partnership with the Chamber in many ways. Through programming and partnership the Chamber has worked cooperatively with the Town and businesses to attract and retain all types of businesses and helped stabilize and increase tax revenues. The Chamber continues to be a hub for economic development in ways the Town does not have the resources to do. By redesigning the space, we have an opportunity to provide improved business services so Lexington will maintain itself as a destination where a variety of businesses choose to launch and grow.

The Visitors Center is a hybrid. Downstairs is largely visitor services, interpretation, retail sales and restrooms. Upstairs, the Chamber has always been a hub of business activities. Before the Town had an Economic Development Officer it was *the* resource for businesses looking to move to Lexington. New businesses turned to the Chamber for assistance as they sought to start, grow, and sustain their business. Today businesses continue to depend on the Chamber. The Chamber helps information and services to businesses deciding whether to locate in Lexington, seeking to attract and retain employees, in hosting clients and by provide support services. The Chamber organizes monthly meetings on relevant topics, networking nights, member referrals, women to women lunch series, business newsletters, facilities SCORE counseling, and much more to facilitate success. Few visitors’ centers provide this invaluable direct support to community businesses, in addition to services for travelers. As a result, Lexington taxpayers benefit from the Visitors Center through business tax dollars.



THE MINUTEMAN BIKEWAY

One of the drivers of increased visitation to Lexington has been the popularity of the Minuteman Bikeway. This resource was never envisioned during the planning for the Visitors Center. Prior to construction, the corridor behind the Visitors Center was a railroad track for the commuter train into Boston. Buildings along the way were built to shield the visual and noise impacts of the multiple train trips daily. There was no need for a passing train to know what was along the route.

Milestone dates for the trail began years after the Visitors Center was built: 1974 first concept for building the commuter bike path; rail service continued until 1981; construction approval was granted in 1991; officially dedicated as the country's 500th rail trail in 1994. The White House designated the Minuteman Bikeway as a "Millennium Trail." In 2008 it was named to the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. Stretching 11 miles, it is one of the most popular commuter and recreational trails in the country.

With the conversion to a major recreational route, thousands pass through the corridor each year. On a typical in-season Saturday, bike counts taken under the direction of the Bicycle Advisory Committee in the vicinity of the Visitors Center, show 4,000+ trips. They are cyclists, walkers, joggers, commuters, families, individuals, locals, and visitors. Some of our tourism efforts have been geared towards finding a way for bikeway users to learn of the many businesses and attractions available to them steps from the bikeway. These cultural tourists have the time to spend their money here. Similar to trying to teach visitors that there is more to see in Lexington than the Battle Green, we must draw bikeway users into the Visitors Center and orient them to all Lexington has to offer.

The economic opportunity available to convert people just passing through into consumers of our local historical sites, shops, and restaurants is substantial. A majority of these recreational travelers make multiple trips along this trail. In recent years, 25 – 50 – 100 mile rides have become common for an increasing number of bikers. It is a priority for the Tourism Committee to convince these travelers to become Lexington consumers. However, under the current configuration, riders barely know there is a building at that location because of the landscaping and building design. Even if they notice the building, the façade that overlooks the bikeway does not look like a place where the public should stop and visit. It resembles the back of a house. While new signage has been approved to identify the building, more is needed. Landscaping will help, but architectural changes and bicycle parking are needed for visitors to be drawn in to this facility.

Multiple town organizations recognize the importance of directing Bikeway travelers into Lexington patrons. Recently, the Bicycle Advisory Committee received funding from the DCR to improve "user information on the Minuteman Bikeway." This is a 3-town grant to hire a design engineer to come up with a plan for improving signage on and off the bikeway, maps, mile markers, kiosks, interpretive display, benches, etc. These initiatives are designed to enhance the user experience. Bikeway users will have more information about the areas they're traveling through -- including towns and their centers, businesses, tourist destinations, etc. The recent Center Streetscape Plan includes bike nodes throughout the Center, including one at the Visitor's Center. ACROSS Lexington is a network of trails that connect to various sites through the Center. This work compliments and underscores the need for a visible rest stop for recreational visitors to Lexington.



HISTORY

A separate warrant article at the 1965 Annual Town Meeting set the stage for the construction, use and management of the building. Lexington was focused on the upcoming national Bicentennial. The community wanted a centralized information resource for national visitors, and most importantly, publicly accessible bathrooms.

Taxpayers were prepared to fund the construction of the building. While there was no doubt of the need, concern surrounded ongoing staffing costs for providing visitor services. A review of the Town Meeting minutes gives a flavor of the debate. In a last minute deal on the floor of Town Meeting, the then President of the Chamber of Commerce, Lee Turbox, agreed that if the Town would build and maintain the physical structure, the Chamber of Commerce would move their offices to the new facility and provide staffing for visitor services. (Interpretive services would be provided by the Town through Battle Green Guides.) That innovative public-private partnership continues to this day.

Originally, the Town covered all utilities. In the late 1990s, the Chamber was required to pay for all utilities. At that time, research determined that the Town remained responsible for the building. The Town and Chamber agreed that the appropriate distribution of costs would have the Town pay for heat, electricity and water, and the Chamber would pay the phone and internet services. Historically, it has been the income from sales of merchandise at the Visitors Center that has paid for the staff necessary to run the visitors services piece.

Few improvements have been made to the Visitors Center over the years. While a custodian used to be assigned to the cleaning and upkeep of the building, that changed in the mid 1990s. It has only been in the past few years under the Public Facilities Department that a schedule has been re-established to regularly clean the facility. While an improvement, we are still working with Public Facilities to help them understand that an ongoing cleaning and maintenance schedule that meets the requirements of a facility that sees over 100,000 visitors per year, with more during April – October, and even more on weekends, has a different staffing need than our other public buildings. Regarding capital work, over the years there has been some cosmetic repairs, but virtually no significant capital investment. At the 2002 Annual Town Meeting, \$100k was appropriated under Article 8h as part of the \$685k Town Building Envelope project for ADA improvement and bathroom updates and funded through the tax levy. This is the last investment (11 years ago) that has been made at this heavily-trafficked site.

BENEFITS OF IMPROVED VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES

Research shows that the more time visitors spend in Lexington, the more money that is pumped into our local economy. Satisfying visitor information needs can be effective in influencing their behavior. By providing answers to basic questions, helping them navigate through the attraction options in the local area, increases satisfaction. While the staff currently does an excellent job providing assistance, the reality is that the physical space constraints are a challenge. Having the space and technology to add a self-serve kiosk with content controlled by Lexington would also help capture the overflow, as well as those who prefer to make their own arrangements. More often than we want, some visitors just cannot work through the maze of people utilizing different aspects of the center during the busiest times in the Center. They leave having their questions unanswered, and are a missed opportunity to encourage spending.

Utilizing survey and data provided through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) and the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) the fastest growing method for determining where to travel is the internet. (See <http://www.massvacation.com/research/> for travel data.)



People are researching their trips and pre-planning based on what they see on the computer. Generally, that is enough to bring them to Town. However, it is still the personal interactions at the Visitors Center that directs them where to go. It is there that they learn the breadth of offerings the community has to offer. Impulse decisions to take the Liberty Ride® or eat at our local restaurants rather than rushing off to Concord or Salem are a direct credit to the information given at the Visitors Center.

One example that happened during summer of 2012 illustrates this point. A couple had planned a driving trip through Massachusetts and mapped their itinerary via the internet. They had pre-planned a quick trip to see take the ninety-minute Liberty Ride® tour and then head to the Northshore for the afternoon. When they returned to the Visitors Center they indicated that they had no idea Lexington had so much to see and wished they had planned more time. As the staff explained more attractions they could take advantage of if they decided to stay, they changed their plans on the spot. They booked a room, and left the Visitors Center with directions on where to eat dinner (in Lexington) and an itinerary for the next day. This only happened, because the staff responded to their cues and because at the time they were in the facility, they were the only ones at the counter. A renewed Visitors Center will provide more space to facilitate connect to visitors in those kinds of one-on one interactions.

Using any internet search engine you will find many reports from across the country of communities who have already upgrading their visitors' center and detailing the benefits of an improved facility. They all mention the same benefits: increased visitor spending and an attractive gateway to the community, encouraging people to be repeat visitors. That location, services and attractions are key factors in effectively delivering messages that reinforce repeat visitors. On October 18, 2011 on the occasion of the re-opening of the Visitors Center on Boston Common after an extensive renovation, Mayor Menino was quoted in *The Back Bay Sun*. He said: "The Visitor Information Center acts as a focal point to welcome people from throughout the world to Boston. These new improvements make it an even more attractive gateway to our city and all it has to offer." He went on to describe that it is a hub of activity used by many organizations used year-round. At the same event, Patrick Moscaritolo, President and CEO of the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau stated "This special partnership with Mayor Menino and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department has paid huge dividends for Boston's visitor industry. Extra visitor spending occurs because of this Center and benefits the thousands of people who work in our industry...." Mr. Moscaritolo added that visitors using the facility will on average visit three additional attractions and stay a day longer as a result of the information and services made available to them.

Understanding our visitors helps to determine the benefit of an improved facility. Informally, we survey our guests as to where they come from and what made them decide to come. That combined with the formal survey we did several years ago, as well as data from the State, we know that approximately 85% of our visitors are from the United States. International travel numbers are the fastest growing segment of the industry. About 30% are within driving distance of Lexington. About 25% are from the West and the balance from the south and middle part of the country. That data also shows that 80% come by car. This data is instructive in determining the realistic possibilities of repeat visitors. It also speaks to the need for continuous data. The Tourism Committee is seeking to purchase a people counter system which will help quantify the volume of tourists coming through the Lexington Visitors Center. Such data is useful in measuring the effects of our marketing efforts and determining the economic impact the Town's tourism dollars.

Translating visits to dollars spent can help us understand the impact of this project. Based on the only data we have in the absence of a people counter, we know at least 100k visitors enter the Center each year, because they voluntarily sign in our guest book. If just 1% of those visitors planned a return trip to Lexington as a result of the improvements in the Visitors Center, that would translate to 1,000 extra



visitors. From Massachusetts Cultural Council and MOTT data, each visitor spends on average \$47.92 per visit, and cultural visitors (those traveling 50 miles or less) spend an additional \$62 per visit. Assuming 25% are cultural repeat visitors, and the rest new visitors, \$63,420 in new spending would be realized. That number jumps to \$317,100 if 5% return to Lexington using the same assumptions. This does not account for the multiplier effect described in the next section. It also assumes that 100k is the base number. We are confident that there are significantly more visitors to Lexington than the 100k who voluntarily sign-in the data at the National Park Service puts the visitation numbers at well over 1 million annually. If the actual number of visitors is higher, the numbers soar:

<i>Visitors</i>	<i>1% repeat/25% cultural</i>	<i>5% repeat/25% cultural</i>
100,000	\$ 63,420	\$ 317,100
250,000	\$ 158,550	\$ 792,750
500,000	\$ 317,100	\$1,585,500
750,000	\$ 475,650	\$2,378,250
1,000,000	\$ 634,200	\$3,171,000

In the absence of true counts, we can only speculate which number is accurate. What we do know is that Lexington is in every history book ever written. We are the *Birthplace of American Liberty* and people come to Massachusetts for its history. It is likely that our actual visitation is closer to the National Park numbers. In any case, every year we delay renewing our Visitors Center, at least this amount of local spending is not being spent in Lexington.

Lexington is blessed by many non-profit organizations from educational to arts, music and more. Their marketing budgets are limited but the programming they offer is extraordinary. The Visitors Center serves as a marketing mechanism to inform visitors about special calendar events that they may not have been aware of prior to coming to Lexington. Groups have reported that the increased visitation has had a positive effect on their bottom line.

Beyond the clear economic benefits, the quality of life of residents is improved by having an active Visitors Center. Bathrooms are a basic need for all. This comfort available to visitors relieves businesses from the burden of use. Residents take advantage of this amenity as well.

The cultural opportunity for residents to entertain their guests is also important. Upon moving to Lexington friends and family want to come to this historic Town. Visitor services can be a welcome break for Lexingtonians while out of town guests are happily entertained.

Because the Lexington Visitors Center is run by the Chamber of Commerce and operates in partnership with the Tourism Committee, the “one-stop” convenience avoids duplications of facilities and services. Businesses partner with the community through fun activities and become more engaged in the community. These strong partnerships provide avenues to additional sources of funding, volunteers, in-kind services, and other invaluable support. Recognizing the important role that the Visitors Center and this partnership with the Chamber plays in attracting and retaining businesses benefits our commercial tax base. Businesses often report that they pay taxes and do not get value for those dollars. The dollars from tourism relieves business tax burdens. Having a state-of-the art Visitors Center will help businesses sell their products, employees, investors, management on the quality of their investment.

The benefits of a vibrant Visitors Center are well documented. Investing in this Visitor Center will provide economic and quality of life benefits that cannot be achieved currently.



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Lexington is the envy of communities throughout the State and region. At every conference, audience members ask questions about how they can market to potential visitors to come to their city or town. In our case, we have the numbers. Masha Traber, Lexington's Liberty Ride Coordinator always says "Lexington is in every history book ever written." Visitors from around the world come to Lexington. Our job is to convince them to extend their stay and enjoy the many amenities Lexington has to offer. In doing so it translates to "heads on beds." Lexington receives 6% in hotel tax for every overnight visit, and the Town collects 0.75% in local option meals tax for every meal eaten in Lexington. These local taxes relieve taxpayer burdens as for the most part, they are revenues from non-Lexington residents.

According to the Governor's Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT), the estimated traveler spending in Lexington for 2010 was \$50+ million, supporting just over 500 jobs, and generating \$3 million in state taxes and \$1.5 million in local taxes. MOTT tracks a variety of marketing and travel statistics. They are public available at www.massvacation.com where if you scroll to the bottom of the page, you can click on "tourism stats" to learn about the economic impact of the tourism industry in Massachusetts.

While the numbers may seem overwhelming, the formulas used are the same ones used in all 50 states. Year to year comparisons are instructive. The fact is that the State is investing heavily in Tourism because it is the third largest job creator in Massachusetts.

In Lexington in particular, our tourism industry supports over 500 jobs. This puts tourism among the top 6 employers in Lexington, according to our Economic Development Officer. (Wolverine World wide is 7th with 350 employees and Brookhaven is 8th with 230 employees. The remaining large companies have fewer than 200 employees.)

Company Name	Number of Employees
MIT Lincoln Laboratory	3500
Shire Pharmaceuticals	1275
Vista Print	850
BAE Systems	530
Cubist Pharmaceuticals	500

If Shire, Vistaprint or Cubist, knew they were leaving money on the table because their building was outdated, would they be content to let time go by while they weigh other priorities? Recent Town Meeting actions say otherwise. Town Meeting should give this economic project the same importance.

Communities across the country recognize the importance of attracting tourists, not only for job creation but for the tax dollars it brings. They go to great lengths to woo visitors. Search the web and you will see the lengths to which communities will go to create tourism where none exists. They do this because the economic impact is well defined.

Most tourist destinations have a nickname and marketing slogans which ads to their identity and has economic value – for example, Williamsburg, Virginia has "Colonial Williamsburg," Hersey, Pennsylvania is called "The Sweetest Place on Earth." New York City uses "I ♥ New York," – all of which is universally recognized. Lexington's nickname is *The Birthplace of American Liberty*. Our



marketing tagline is “*Linger in Lexington.*” This slogan has been trademarked and was developed because it harkens back to our history, is reflective of our taverns of old, and connotes what we want people to do. It defines who we are and what we have to offer. According to Jeff Coy, ISHC, the president of JLC Hospitality Consulting, “Like any product, cities must grab your attention, attract your interest, and build your desire to take action – to experience the excitement of visiting a new destination.” A nickname adds economic value for attracting tourists. Our 21st century Visitors Center should be designed to encourage guests to “*Linger in Lexington.*”

HOTEL AND MEALS TAX

The efforts of the Tourism Committee to give visitors reasons to spend time, and therefore money, in Lexington are paying off already. The data from the Finance Department shows that in FY2011 & FY2012 hotel/meals tax totaled just over \$2 million of which \$630k represented new growth. That means that 31% of revenues in this category are new to Lexington in the last two years.

Collections in FY2013 are almost \$700k. This puts the Town on pace to double new growth over FY2012. No longer can these increases be attributed to the adoption of the local option tax as it was implemented in FY10. This objective data demonstrates the “*Linger in Lexington*” campaign has a direct benefit to Town revenues. Anecdotal evidence reinforces this – front line service providers report that more visitors came to Lexington this year planning on spending multiple days in Town. Our two major hotels, aloft and element, indicate that their new growth is in weekend overnights: i.e., from tourists. Imagine what we could do with the right tools in a renewed Visitors Center.

	FY 2012	FY 2013 YTD	Projected FY 2013	Actual New Growth FY 2012	Projected New Growth FY 2013	Percentage Growth
Hotel/Motel Tax	\$ 718,706.00	\$474,419.60	\$ 948,839.20	\$ 127,981.00	\$230,133.20	32%
Meals Tax	\$ 361,435.00	\$207,042.12	\$ 414,084.24	\$ 22,986.00	\$ 52,649.24	15%
Total Tax	\$1,080,141.00	\$ 681,462	\$ 1,362,923	\$ 150,967	\$ 282,782	26%

MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Travelers to Lexington not only provide direct tax revenue, they produce secondary impacts. Tourism dollars have both a direct and indirect a multiplier effect in job creation, employee spending, new revenues, and more. According to the MOTT as explained on their website, “these secondary outputs (sales), employment and earnings (wage and salary income) arise from ‘indirect’ and ‘induced’ impacts.”

“*Indirect* impacts occur as travel industry business operators, such as restaurateurs, purchase goods, such as food and beverages, and services, such as electricity and building maintenance, from local suppliers. These purchases generate additional output or sales indirectly.”

“*Induced* impact occurs as a result of the employees of businesses, and their suppliers, spending part of their earnings in the area. This spending generates sales in addition to the indirect impact.

The sum of the indirect and induced effects comprises the total secondary impact in the state. The ratio of the sum of primary output generated plus secondary output to initial expenditures alone is commonly termed the sales or output "multiplier".



There are three multipliers that that State uses: earnings; output; and employment. These multipliers are defined as follows:

Earnings multiplier: The ratio of total earnings generated to the initial spending.

Output multiplier: The ratio of total output to the initial spending. Every travel dollar generated an additional 59 cents in secondary sales.

Employment multiplier: The ratio of total employment to initial spending. Every one million dollars spent by domestic and international travelers in Massachusetts supports nearly 12 jobs.

Table 14: Multipliers of Travel in Massachusetts, 2007-2011

<u>Multipliers</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
Output Multiplier	1.59	1.58	1.60	1.59	1.59
Earning Multiplier	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.43	0.41
Employment Multiplier	14.0	13.7	13.9	12.7	11.9

*Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, RIMS II; U.S. Travel Association
Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism website – www.massvacation.com*

Applying these multipliers to the \$50 million in traveling spending in Lexington in 2010 translates real impact. Based on the total dollars spent, \$29,500,000 in secondary sales was also generated. Those dollars supported 595 jobs, and \$20,500,000 in earnings. While these numbers may seem exaggerated, they are accurate, especially in the context of the State statistics.

Direct domestic travel expenditures in Massachusetts by county rank Suffolk, Middlesex, Norfolk, Barnstable, and Essex as the top 5 counties, in that order. In 2011:

County	Direct Spending	State %	Increase from 2010	Payroll income	Jobs
Suffolk	\$7.0 billion	47.7%	8.9%	\$1.3 billion	41,500
Middlesex	\$2.2 billion	14.8%	7.8%	\$552 million	19,500
Norfolk	\$922.5 million	6.3%	10.1%	\$268.3 million	9,300
Barnstable	\$851.8 million	5.8%		\$217.6 million	8,400
Essex	\$752.7 million		9.0%	\$168 million	6,200

Source: Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism website – www.massvacation.com

By understanding the economic impact of tourism spending, it becomes clear that the Town has a financial incentive to provide a building that fulfills our programmatic goals. This project is about providing opportunities to generate revenue through sources other than our taxpayers. It is the equivalent of rezoning a parcel of land to enable the development of projects that generate greater tax revenue.



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LEXINGTON'S VISITORS BY MARKET AND MODE

The national definition of a tourist is someone who has traveled at least 50 miles to reach their destination. Every state in the Union uses the same methodology for tracking visitor statistics. It is this data that ranks Massachusetts as the 6th most visited state in the country. While the economic statistics are impressive, it is only a part of the story. There is a significant group of visitors who live from 0 – 50 miles from Lexington. They can come back again and again. These visitors are known as “cultural tourists.”

Cultural tourism is aimed at our arts, heritage, recreational and natural resources. It is a new way of connecting to multi-cultural and multi-generational visitors. According to the Massachusetts Cultural Council website, “recent tourism research indicates clearly that Cultural Tourists are a force to be reckoned with. Here's why:

1. Cultural Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the travel industry.
2. Cultural Tourists spend \$62 more per day and \$200 more per trip than other travelers.
3. Cultural Tourists include multiple destinations during a visit and stay one half-day longer at each destination.
4. Cultural Tourists have higher levels of income.”

In an effort to attract these cultural tourists, Revolutionary Revelry began in May 2011. May was chosen because there were already many cultural events happening and our marketing could unify these events and give cultural tourists a reason to come back over and over. One marketing tool has been our booth at the annual AAA Travel Marketplace at Gillette Stadium in early March attended by over 17k potential visitors. At this conference, virtually all attendees are cultural tourists, looking for staycations in driving distance to home. These are visitors for whom an improved visitors center would enhance the economic impact of their stay.

To maximize the economic opportunity, Lexington must position itself as a part of a broader region. The State is divided into regional tourism councils (RTCs). Lexington is assigned by the State Legislature to the Greater Merrimack Valley region as a member of the Greater Merrimack Valley Visitors and Convention Bureau (GMCVB) which leverages State and regional dollars to market the region (www.merrimackvalley.org). Lexington is also a member of the Greater Boston Visitors and Convention Bureau (GBCVB). Our presence on the front page of their website, www.bostonusa.com exposes us to travelers looking to come to Boston and provides a high search engine optimization score.

In trying to understand the market a survey was conducted of Liberty Ride® passengers in 2004. At that time, visitors from Western States accounted for 25%, with 14% from California. The Mid-Western states represented 19%, spread evenly. New England saw 18% of the ridership, Massachusetts accounting for 11%. The Mid-Atlantic States represented 13% and the Southern States 12%, with each of those sending 1-4%. International visitors represented 12% overall, of which half were from the UK. The remaining countries were: Australia, Canada, Denmark, India, Philippines, and Scotland.

Through speaking with visitors in recent years, we know that we continue to attract significant visitors from California, Texas, Florida and New York. In general the numbers of international visitors has increased. While international visitors continue to come from England, growing numbers are coming from France, Japan and China, in part because of new direct service to Logan Airport from Japan and China. The French market has been stimulated by both state marketing and our Sister City relationship.



On March 13, 2013, Betsy Wall, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism kicked off Tourism U with an International Marketing Overview slide presentation. As reported at that session, international traveler spending is on pace for a record year. In 2012 international travelers spent \$170 billion in the United States. President Obama recently signed into law the Travel Promotion Act. The goal is to attract 100 million international travelers annually by 2021 which is 50% higher than in 2012, with the expectation that these international travelers will spend \$250 billion annually.

Towards this goal, a unique public-private partnership which is the federal government's first ever coordinated global marketing initiative to promote the United States as a travel destination has been established. The mission of "Brand USA" is to "encourage increase international visitation to the United States and grow America's share of the global travel market." They hope to recapture the world's interest and inspire visitors to come to the US.

Massachusetts, through MOTT is a founding partner. For every dollar spent in advertising, as a founder, an additional 30% will be generated for every advertising/promotional dollar the State spends. The reasons the State is targeting these visitors is that overseas travelers stay longer, spends more money, fills rooms mid-week, and most important for Massachusetts, their travel is not weather dependent. In 2011, 2.1 international visitors traveled to Massachusetts which was a 12% growth rate over 2010. Their visits supported 18k Massachusetts jobs, generated \$138 million in local and state taxes. The top international visitors to Massachusetts come from:

Country	Visitation to MA 2011	MA Mkt. Share 2011
UK	222,000	5.8%
Germany	120,000	6.6%
Japan	49,000	1.5%
France	69,000	4.6%
Italy	54,000	6.1%
India	50,000	7.5%
Brazil	54,000	3.6%
China	139,000	12.8%

This is consistent with our observations in Lexington. In order to meet the needs of this growing international market, our Visitor Center must respond to the cultural expectations of these visitors. Very few centers meet this demand. Lexington has an opportunity to gain additional market share by being ahead of the curve in making our Visitors Center a welcome center for international guests.

How people travel to Lexington also affects the type of services needed in the Visitors Center. The personal automobile continues to be the preferred method of travel (80% per Liberty Ride parking data). Tour busses are second. As demands for public transportation options have increased, the Tourism Committee has worked with the MBTA to make public transportation a more viable option. Wording on the announcements for stops has been improved, and instructions detailed on brochures have been improved. Connecting service to Alewife on Sundays (which is currently unavailable) is being explored. Thanks to local businesses such as the Ride Studio Café, and the Greater Boston Running Company, as well as the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway, visitors also are now biking and walking to Lexington. Those from further away fly to Logan Airport and stay in Boston. These people use public transportation,

rental cars, or tour busses for a one day excursion to Lexington. Improvements to the Visitors Center must respond to visitors who use multi-modal transportation to arrive there.

It is impossible to say for sure how many visit Lexington each year. A people counter in the Visitors Center is planned and is pending Town Manager approval. This data would go a long way towards understanding the magnitude of visitors, whether or not the off season traffic warrants more attractions being available, and the trends to understand how our advertising is driving new visitors to Lexington.

Certain data is known: National Parks draw significant visitation. At the Minute Man National Park over 1 million guests are counted annually. Due to its close proximity, it is most likely that a large majority of people coming to the area to see the Minute Man National Park would also stop in Lexington.

While no formal count is taken at the Visitors Center, we believe the numbers are greater. At least 100,000 people voluntarily sign the guest book in the Visitors Center each year. Parties of 2+ enter the facility, and generally only one person signs. Typically, those who come by tour bus do not stop and sign the book. Local bus companies bring 50 or so per bus, and virtually all orient the tour inside the Visitors Center in front of the diorama. This is a premier destination, especially peaking during fall foliage. It is not usual to have 10 -15 busses per day at peak in October and two – three per day on average during the other 5 months of the season, with bus capacities of 55. Additionally, the Liberty Ride® hosts 130 charters annually with 2 – 55 visitors and 1 -5 busses per charter. Our evidence demonstrates that the numbers likely exceed 500,000 per year using the Visitors Center, and in any case, the numbers entering this small building are staggering.

No matter what number we use, in 50 years there has been significant wear and tear on the Visitors Center. While the bathrooms were renovated in 2002, even with the most conservative numbers, over 1 million people have used them in the last 10 years. It is past time for a renewal.

By understanding the market of who comes to Lexington, and the modes by which they arrive, we are poised to create a world-class tourism orientation facility that will thereby generate revenues for the Town, attractions, and local businesses.



LESSONS FROM OTHER VISITORS CENTERS

This section contains data from visitor centers throughout the country. In November 2002 the Asheville Chamber of Commerce in North Carolina completed a survey of 152 Visitors Centers (see Table 9). This section reports on the information gained from these interviews and surveys. Their results are a good source of information for deciding what Lexington believes will deliver quality services to our guests. The ideas and information may or may not become part of the Lexington Visitors Center program.

Questions addressed by the Asheville survey include:

- What are the offerings that make each Visitors Center most attractive to visitors?
- What can a Visitors Center do to increase length of stay?
- How do centers generate revenues to assist in lowering operating costs?
- What are the benefits of forming partnerships with multiple agencies in operating a center?
- What lasting impressions are visitors left with and what makes them want to return in the future?
- Do local residents of the town use the center on a regular basis and if so, what makes them do so?

Visitors Centers interviewed ranged in size from 600 square feet (San Juan County, UT) to 22,000 square feet (Ketchikan, AK, Discovery Center). Centers that primarily serve a CVB/Chamber purpose are generally around 3,000 - 4,000 square feet. Centers that include multiple partners and/or emphasize interpretation, as well as visitor information, generally need to be much larger, depending upon the programs and displays to be accommodated. Thirty-three such Centers were contacted including Asheville NC, Charleston SC, Cincinnati OH, Coldfoot AK, Fairbanks AK, Ketchikan AK CVB, Ketchikan AK Discovery Center, Lancaster CA, Moab UT, Natchez MI, San Juan County UT.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Basic “infrastructure” that Visitors Centers either had or managers suggested be considered are:

- Easily accessible public restrooms
- Covered space for unloading and entry of visitors
- Well-designed signs – including the international “*T*” symbol for information services
- Kiosks and displays in multiple languages
- Attractive space(s) that can be used by the community
- Administrative office space that is separated from the busy public use areas
- Display spaces and sign areas that can be rented for advertising
- Space for brochures
- Internet stations for visitor trip planning and email
- Attractive landscaping and outdoor public spaces
- Dump station for motor coaches
- Ample parking, for cars, RVs, motor coaches

LOCATION

Visitors Centers need to be located where the most visitors have access to the facility. Centers are generally located downtown, near heavy-draw tourist attractions, and/or on main highway routes. Downtown centers can serve the additional purpose of easing traffic and parking congestion by providing ample parking and encouraging pedestrian or trolley/shuttle use. Federal highway enhancement dollars have been available for construction of downtown centers that encourage people to leave their cars and walk or take public transportation. In recent years this funding is harder to obtain.



TABLE 9 Visitor Center Services Survey Summary				
	Average	Median	High	Low
Size of your Visitor Center (sf)	3,297	1,300	50,000	100
No. parking spaces	90	25	2,619	0
Bus spaces	6	3	100	0
RV spaces	8	4	100	0
How many visitors does center average per month	8,033	2,745	110,000	50
Per year?	132,622	29,910	4 million	600
Total visitors to your area, per year	5.5 million	2.5 million	37 million	20,000
The most frequently offered services at the Centers include	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indoor brochure racks (96% have these),• Public rest rooms (78%),• Inside rest area/benches/tables (61%),• Wall map (57%)			
At least 25% of the Centers offer these services in addition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retail sales (39%)• Theater/video (37%)• Baby changing area (35%)• Vending machines (32%)• Food/refreshments (30%)• Sound system (27%)• Reception area motorcoach/bus tours (27%)• Attraction ticket sales (26%)			
Source: Asheville NC. Area Chamber of Commerce, Community Research Center, Tom Tveidt, Survey of 152 Visitor Centers, November 2002				

SEASONS/HOURS OF OPERATION

Most Visitors Centers are open daily, year-round, with the exception of major holidays – expanding hours and increasing staff during the heaviest tourist season and on weekends. The Moab, UT center finds that being open in the evening draws visitors into downtown – increasing evening activity at downtown businesses and building support for the center.

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

Smaller CVB/Chamber centers generally have two full-time staff, year-round – possibly increasing to three staff in the summer season, or supplementing with part-time staff on weekends. Larger, multi-agency centers with strong interpretive mission can have much larger staffing needs. Some centers use volunteers; others strictly do not. Many center managers feel most comfortable having trained, paid staff behind the counter to ensure that the information given is accurate and to assure quality. Volunteers are often used simply to meet and greet guests.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Nearly all Visitors Centers view their primary purpose as being a “one-stop” source of information that maximizes convenience to the visitor. The “package” of information and services that is offered differs, depending upon the needs of the primary visitor population being served, the characteristics of the locality and region, and the organizations that participate in the center.

Visitors Center managers offered the following advice regarding the basic purpose of the center:

- Consider, and offer, what visitors want and need most. Provide information and services related to travel logistics, private business offerings, transportation, public lands and attractions, educational experiences, safety, and ways to reduce conflicts between visitors and local communities and resources.
- Incorporate multiple partners. Partnerships with multiple private, non-profit and government agencies are encouraged. This facilitates “one-stop” convenience and avoids duplication of facilities and services. Strong partnerships lend revenue and budget stability, as there are more sources of funding, in-kind services, and other support.

Several of the Visitors Centers contacted during interviews were primarily a partnership at the CVB and the local Chamber of Commerce. These centers tended to focus on trip planning and booking/vending services. Others had multiple partners, including local city and county government, CVBs, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, state parks, state tourism agencies, and Natural History Associations. These latter centers tended to be larger, and may have a stronger interpretive/educational emphasis.

- “Go Regional/be a Gateway.” Provide information for the larger region for which the community is a “gateway.” This helps visitors with trip planning, will attract visitors to stay longer or return to your hub community, and generates good will and reciprocity with adjacent communities in the region.

ATTRACTIONS, EXHIBITS AND TECHNOLOGY FOR VISITORS

Center attractions vary with the mission of the center and available space. Most visitors centers view their role as giving the visitor a “taste” of what is available to explore in the region, then help them access information about how to experience the area. If a center offers too much for people to see, they may be viewed as competition for other private tourism attractions. Having “live” presentation, demonstrations or story telling can keep the center lively for residents or return visitors.

Most of the visitor information centers interviewed have the following basic services or exhibits, to the extent space allows:

- Staffed greeting/information desk(s)
- Large display map of locale and region
- Photographic exhibits and murals
- Retail book and gift sales area
- Vending space – for brochures, advertising, business displays
- Small meeting rooms
- Small display cases where public art, museum pieces, and other material can be rotated through for visitor interest



Larger multi-agency centers, with an “interpretive” mission, generally also have:

- Interpretive display spaces show-casing local history, resources, and attractions
- Theater space (from small VCR area to 75-seat theater)
- Attractive public spaces and views
- Space for live presentations or demonstration of local arts
- Indoor classroom space
- Outdoor interpretive space

Center managers recommend going “simple” on technology that visitors are going to use or be served by. It is important that videos run without a hitch, that visitor internet stations (if provided) work consistently, can be easily de-bugged, and that the content and length of use is controlled. While internet stations will bring visitors in the door, most centers recommend that visitors be referred to other internet access locations for their personal use.

ADVERTISING, VENDING AND BOOKING

Many visitors centers offer some kind of advertising, vending and/or booking services – for several reasons:

- Visitors want it, because it adds to the utility of the center as a “one stop” location for tourist services and attractions and they can make arrangements for their trip conveniently and quickly.
- Offering detailed information about overnight stays and helping visitors’ book accommodations is the primary way that visitors centers can increase the length of stay.
- Advertising, vending, and booking can generate revenue for the center.
- Businesses often want the center to serve this role, and it helps convince businesses that the center is effective at keeping visitors in town and promoting local business.

Centers help make connections between visitors and local visitor services and attractions in a range of ways. It is most effective to have a “real person” helping with referrals and/or bookings – not just automated kiosks. Visitors want to talk with a “real person.” It is very important to do regular outreach to businesses to avoid misunderstandings about what the center does and does not offer and to understand their concerns about how their or other businesses are represented at the center.

RETAIL

Retail income is often an important regular source of operating funds for most visitors centers. Nearly all visitors centers contacted had some retail, ranging from specialty books, maps and guides to logo gifts and T-shirts.

RESIDENT USE OF VISITORS CENTERS

All center managers interviewed agreed that encouraging resident use was important to building enthusiasm for the center in the community, obtaining support from local leaders, and garnering “good will” from local businesses. When residents and visitors interact in the same facility, the relationship between the “host” and the “hosted” improves. Visitors feel that their experience is enhanced by contact with local residents. The extent of resident use of the visitors center depends upon its primary purpose and offerings, size and amenities. Many centers include public spaces that can be enjoyed or used by residents. Spaces such as meeting rooms and reception areas that are available for residents to rent and use are also common.



COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL VISITORS CENTER PROGRAM

1. Signage
2. Trained personnel
3. Requirements to carry tourism program brochures and literature.
4. Role of centers funded by other sources.
5. Development of revenue streams.
6. Visitors Center coordinating sub-committee (Tourism Committee & Chamber of Commerce)
7. Evaluation process
8. Hours of operation



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CURRENT STATE OF VISITORS CENTER

The Lexington Visitors Center, which is a Town-owned facility, is constantly referred to as “quaint” by the tourists. This description is a polite way of saying “outdated.” While \$100k was allocated in 2002 to allow wheelchairs to access the building and bathrooms, the building is not fully ADA compliant. It also does not meet the modern needs of the travelers who utilize the facility. It currently does not integrate advances in technology. The explosion in international travelers was not contemplated when the building was designed.

The Visitors Center was authorized by Town Meeting in 1965 and opened its doors in 1970. It is in need of updating finishes, fixtures and improved display space. Space is limited. More space is required to accommodate the material stored within and to accommodate the crowds. Visitors frequently come in groups, offloading from buses or tour groups from the Battle Green and there is inadequate space to accommodate them when they arrive. During the peak seasons of July – mid August and late September through October, groups as large as 100+ crowd the Visitors Center simultaneously. Interpretative services are provided by the Town through Battle Green Guides and Liberty Ride® Guides. Tour groups of all sizes huddle around the diorama. Depending on the weather and level of interest, they typically remain for 10 - 30 minutes. A 55 passenger bus load takes up the existing square footage making it difficult for others to enter to access the bathrooms, obtain directions, interact with staff to plan their stay, or to make purchases.

The Visitors Center serves multi-purposes: The first floor houses visitor services: it serves as an information hub, memorabilia shop, veteran’s memorial, historical display, allows for interpretive programming, and provides public bathroom facilities; The second floor serves as the Chamber of Commerce office and meeting room. Storage facilities are in the basement. The current program is:

PROGRAM

Level One

- Visitor information desk
- Retail displays
- Cash register
- USS Lexington plaque & bell, photographs, and other memorabilia
- Diorama
- Attraction displays
- Chamber business displays
- Tables with brochures
- Restrooms

Level Two

- Chamber Offices (meeting room/layout space, workstation, office, equipment area, office).

Lower Level

- Storage (holiday lights, Chamber, Lexington Historical Society, National Heritage Museum)
- Mechanical room



ACCESSIBILITY

In 2002, the exterior elevations were raised to allow for front door access at ground level. The rear entrance from the bikepath is not accessible – there is a platform there. During the 2002 renovations, the first floor and bathrooms were made handicap accessible. A steep staircase that is placed in the most trafficked area of the first floor, as well as a rear staircase behind the displays are the two egresses to the second floor. Therefore, the Chamber Offices are not handicap accessible. Additionally, the stairs to the basement are treacherous. There is no elevator. Considering this is where most of the storage for the building is, it should be serviced by an elevator.

INTERIOR

Currently, the interior space of the Visitors Center is constrained by the placement of the both staircases and the bathrooms. The effect of these items makes small choppy spaces, that don't lend themselves to a natural flow of traffic. The diorama, given to the Town as a gift from former Cary Library Director and Iranian Hostage, William Buckley, is large and covers the useable back wall. Almost every tour group starts at the diorama for orientation, year-round. In inclement weather, most of the tour is conducted in front of this exhibit. Groups are expected to stand from 10 – 30 minutes or more during that tour. Because of the way it is crammed in with retail merchandise, brochures, and Historical Society advertisements, the diorama in effect not only consumes the physical area in which it sits, but the area expands to fill the majority of useable space in the entire Visitors Center. This makes any other use impossible. Often when tours are taking place, the staff stands at either door and directs visitors outside, around the building in order to use the respective bathroom, or to reach the staff at the desk for visitor information. This is awkward, inefficient and impossible during inclement weather, and results in lost opportunities for converting visitors into longer-term consumers for Lexington businesses.





EXTERIOR

The deficiencies of the landscaping have been discussed in the Battle Green Master Plan approved by the Selectmen in 2010. Corrective action to the landscaping is recommended in that document. Specific visitor exterior building and landscaping requirements are:

- Landscaping has become overgrown and dwarfs the building immediately in front of the building making it difficult to find. The greater area includes green space which is used for picnicking, concerts, and events. Landscape design needs to reflect this use while being sensitive to the overall context of the Battle Green area.
- Hardscape includes the USS Lexington and World War II memorials which could be better connected to the building. There is currently no place for those who wish to honor our heroes to sit and reflect on their sacrifice. This too, should be added.
- Signage has been improved in recent years. As part of the overall signage program a prominent site specific sign was placed in the front of the building. When travelers utilize their GPS to find the Visitors Center, it is difficult to locate. Being set back so far from Massachusetts it is hard to see. Recently the HDC approved an additional sign at Massachusetts Avenue which will help visitors more easily locate the building. There is also a small sign which acknowledges the Chamber of Commerce above the door. Signage indicating hours of operation would be an improvement. Rear signage designed to draw recreational visitors into the building is currently being fabricated for the rear of the building.
- Lighting is limited in the area and is confined to the light fixtures affixed to the building and should be improved to reflect the year-round use of the building.

- Building Envelope was designed to attract visitors from Massachusetts Avenue. The rear entrance was never expected to serve as a regular entrance point. Originally the building backed the commuter rail. As such, there was no need for a connection to the rear area. Today's facility should be designed to draw bikeway users into the facility as welcomed guests.
- Bicycle racks currently exist at the rear of the building; however, during the season they are overfilled and discourage cyclists from stopping and lingering; better placement and quantity are needed.



- Seating is limited and should be expanded. Immediately in front of the building are two memorial benches. A couple of picnic tables are placed outdoors during the season. Typically visitors sit on the grass. This should be accomplished as envisioned in the Battle Green Masterplan.

MAINTENANCE

The Facilities Department manages the cleaning and maintenance as per that 1965 agreement. The custodians clean on varied schedules based on the season. More people utilize the building in a year than any other building in Town. (The next closest would be the Library, Cary Hall or the High School which see less than 25% of the traffic assuming the minimum number that sign the guest book.) Heaviest use is on the weekends when it is hardest to get ongoing or even emergency cleaning services. Although not part of their responsibility, Chamber staff end up putting on rubber gloves to unclog toilets, wipe the floor after illness or misses, and other routine cleaning because the custodial staffing is not scheduled on weekends. Capital and maintenance schedules have not met the requirements of such a heavily trafficked facility and need to be re-examined. The Public Facilities Department is reviewing this facility and working to take corrective action for the future.



VISITORS CENTER NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

When the Visitors Center was built, it naturally focused on the perceived needs of the day. It took tremendous courage from those Town Meeting Members to try a new approach through the public-private partnership that was created on the floor of Town Meeting. Back then who would have envisioned computers, internet, cell phones, and all the communication tools that we expect today. Routine national and international travel was evolving. As to be expected, services reflected identified needs. It is now time to maximize the economic opportunity with which we are blessed by meeting 21st century needs.

The Visitors Center serves a hybrid of operations. The Chamber of Commerce operates upstairs as a resource for local businesses to learn to grow and expand market share. Visitor needs are met primarily on the first floor. In researching best practices, and thinking about the services needed in this changing world of tourism, there are certain principles that should be incorporated in the renewed building.

- ❖ Providing interpretive services and education is a responsibility
- ❖ Paid, trained staff assures the accuracy and quality of information
- ❖ Volunteers to meet and greet visitors are a welcome way to engage the community
- ❖ More is more when it comes to maximizing time and money spent
- ❖ Tourists prefer the Center to be a “one-stop” shop for information and offerings
- ❖ Strong local and regional partnerships maximizes economic opportunities
- ❖ Programming draws people downtown and keeps the Center lively
- ❖ Visual connections to the Visitors Center are important
- ❖ The Visitors Center is a key stakeholder in the Battle Green Master Plan

Below is a summary of the components that should be accommodated in the Visitors Center. Additionally, all exterior building and site work should be consistent with that outlined in the Battle Green Master Plan approved by the Selectmen on March 14, 2011.

EXTERIOR

- Building Envelope painted and continuously maintained in good repair
- Improved rear entrance welcoming recreational visitors from the Bikeway
- Adequate quantity of bicycle racks to encourage lingering
- Landscaping that connects the focal points
- Lighting for all seasons and weather for safe passage and to allow night-time activities
- Appropriate hardscape
- Site/directional signage front and rear

INTERIOR

Level One

- Orientation room large enough for full bus tour (25-55) without impacting visitor services
- Counter that accommodates 2-3 working at same time that separate information and retail transactions
- Display and maps of attractions and the region
- Calendar of Weekly events
- Self-serving kiosk
- Retail display areas
- Contemplative place to honor veterans and the USS Lexington bell and other memorabilia
- Adequate lighting for all seasons and weather
- Interior resting area to read information or have a snack
- Clean, accessible bathrooms in sufficient quantity for the amount of traffic

Level Two

- Office space for Chamber Operations
- Copying area sufficient to accommodate large mailings, faxing, and other office functions
- Fully ADA accessible
- Possible community space, with secured after hour entrance
- Air handling for heat and cold

Lower Level

- Storage space accessible by elevator
- Mechanical Room
- Plumbing, electrical, internet and telephone renewal

MAINTENANCE

The Town will continue to provide maintenance and custodial support for the facility. Options reviewed for ensuring coverage meets usage demands.



COSTS AND FUNDING

In order to consider the potential project, Colin Smith, AIA, Colin Smith Architects, Inc., (former Chairman of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors) prepared design concepts and preliminary estimates based on industry standards and conservative square foot analysis. This level of detail proved to be confusing. Readers could not understand that the public design process going forward would engage all stakeholders. Ultimately, the Department of Public Facilities will oversee the project. Therefore, all sketches has been intentionally omitted from this report on program.

During the public hearing process, it was suggested that an interpretive designer be involved from the beginning. Preliminary discussions were held with a local interpretive designer who has expertise in design interpretation for similar projects across the country including these more close to Lexington: “Seeds of Liberty” exhibit at the National Heritage Museum, the Paul Revere House, Faneuil Hall Visitors Center, Lowell National Historical Park, Bunker Hill Museum and the North Bridge Visitors Center. Costs vary widely based on the level of design, layered graphics, and simplicity of structure. The exhibit design generally represents 18-25% of the total exhibit budget. Costs can range from \$150 - \$700 + per square foot. The Lexington Visitor Center project would likely fall into the lower range. It is estimated that there will be 900 – 1300 square feet of interpretive and orientation information for graphic displays, audio visual media, brochures, maps, etc. For preliminary budgeting purposes an exhibit cost of \$200 - \$400 per square foot is reasonable. Design cost range would be \$40k - \$80k based on 1,000 square feet, with a construction cost of \$160k – 320k. A realistic budget total for design and construction of the interior orientation and interpretive information is: \$200k to \$400k.

As part of the design, detailed cost estimating will be developed for design and construction for the orientation/interpretive displays, building, and landscape. In the meanwhile, Mr. Smith’s work provided a funding order of magnitude. In the absence of more detailed information, it is estimated that the order of magnitude of the project will require an investment of approximately \$230 - \$240 per square foot. In total, \$1.8 million is the likely range for project costs. This is based on a project that would include:

Ground Floor (approximately 3,600 square feet)
Level Two (approximately 3,100 square feet)
Basement (access, storage and utilities)
Exterior Site improvements (may be included in Battle Green Master Plan funding)
Orientation/interpretive displays
FF&E (Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment)
Soft Costs:

Construction Costs
Interpretive Design Costs
A&E Design Costs (10 % - 15% if LEED)
LEED Silver Costs (5%)
Contingency (10 %)

The projected economic impact of a well-designed Visitors Center justifies this investment. In consultation with Town Counsel, a portion of this project is eligible for Community Preservation Act funding under historic resources. It falls under this category because it is located within a National Historic District, the Battle Green District, and having been built in anticipation of the Bicentennial, it has a place in history. CPA funds may be used to refurbish and existing building, but may not be used for new construction. Therefore, it is estimated that 39% of the project will be paid for from CPA funds, and 61% from the tax levy.



Another method to consider for funding is through new growth in the Hotel and Meals taxes. In the last two fiscal years, \$630K in new growth has been received by the Town in these categories. Some communities use all of their hotel taxes to fund tourism marketing and services. Lexington currently dedicates approximately \$40k of the approximately \$1 million annual collections towards tourism. (The Town pays the full cost of the Battle Green Guide program in both payroll and expenses, and \$25k in tourism marketing.)

Going forward, in the 1st & 2nd quarters of FY2013, the Town has collected \$681k in Hotel/Meals tax. Based on these collections, \$282k in new growth is estimated from the full fiscal year. If the Town were to fund the Visitors Center project exclusively using this new growth revenue, the project would be funded in 6 years. If the 39% CPA funds were included, the tax levy portion could be funded in as little as 4 years. Further increases in local spending and tax revenue are not assumed in this model. Therefore, it is realistic to believe that there would be a short-term payoff if the new growth as revenue stream is used to pay for the project.

Reinvesting in our Visitors Center has direct benefits to the Lexington taxpayers. Directing these dollars towards this is reasonable. Based on new taxes and spending we believe that within 5-7 years, our investment will be repaid in tourism dollars.



CONCLUSION

Over 100,000 people visit Lexington every year. Whether these visitors stay to simply view the Battle Green or decide to *Linger in Lexington* has a tremendous economic impact on Lexington taxpayers. The multiplier effect of visitors frequenting our restaurants, shops, and staying in our accommodations benefits these businesses beyond the actual dollars spent. Lexington taxpayers also benefit from the hotel and meals tax generated from an extended stay.

For tens of thousands of travelers their first stop in our Town is the Lexington Visitors Center. This dated, tired, dark public facility creates their first impression of our Town. Does it entice them to stay? As effective as the Visitors Center staff is, the décor, furnishings, displays, and restrooms are outdated and create an uninspiring image of our Town. This heavily-used public building is not reflective of our values nor of the excellence and quality in town services we strive to deliver.

Rebuilding a first-class Lexington Visitors Center is an investment that will generate economic opportunity. Creating a positive impression, engaging tourists, and orienting them to all the attractions and resources our Town has to offer makes financial sense. The new building will be designed to compensate for the setback Massachusetts Avenue location, as well as to take advantage of the significant opportunity presented by the heavy traffic on the Minuteman Bikeway. Over the last decade we have improved our offerings, coordinated tourism operations, and improved customer satisfaction. A modern Visitors Center will allow us to use 21st century technology, be sensitive to multi-cultural norms, and utilize best practices to deliver first-class service.

Tourism is the third largest industry in Massachusetts and Lexington/Concord ranks as the fourth most visited destination in the State. Tourism can contribute to significant revenue that can help relieve taxpayer burden. The new growth in hotel/meals tax in the last few years is indicative that there is untapped economic potential from tourism dollars. Our historical significance as *The Birthplace of American Liberty* brings thousands to our doorstep. After 50 years, it is time to renovate the “doorway.”



Appendix

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Appendix A

Lexington Tourism Committee

November 28, 2011

Mission:

To create economic development opportunities through tourism. To be achieved by:

- Building awareness of the many attractions available to tourists and local residents in our town;
- Fostering an environment where the town, attractions, organizations and businesses collaborate to reinforce the visitor experience;
- Running tourist attractions;
- Creating and managing events and festivals; and
- Acting as a point of contact for tourism information in Lexington.

Vision:

Lexington is known throughout the United States and internationally as a world-class tourism destination offering a unique and seamless range of services for tourists and residents alike. Visitors are encouraged to *Linger in Lexington*, thereby generating revenues for the town, attractions and businesses.

Powers and Duties as defined by Town By-law:

Standing Committee approved by Town Meeting April 4, 2007

Code of Lexington, Chapter 29, Article VIII

The Tourism Committee is charged with enhancing and promoting tourism within the Town. The Committee shall work with the Chamber of Commerce, the Historical Society, the National Heritage Museum, and the National Park Service to insure a cohesive tourism experience.



Voted June 4, 2013

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Appendix B

Visitors Center Programmatic Brainstorming Notes

March 15, 2012

The purpose of the session was to discuss the programmatic needs for the Visitors Center building, and to have some conversations regarding the role of the Visitors Center in the context of other offerings throughout the Town. Comments from all were recorded, whether or not there was agreement on those issues and are listed in no particular order. The comments can be categorized to several areas: adequate bathroom, design issues, tourism issues, cultural programs and how entities work together. Here are the points raised at the meeting:

- What is the program taking place at the Visitors Center?
- Should be highlighting local businesses.
- Do we have the correct number of bathroom stalls for busloads of 55, or multiple busloads?
- What is the usage time? Are the lines waiting for the bathroom acceptable? Is this even an issue?
- Staff at the Visitors Center has received some feedback from guests that the restroom is the cleanest public restroom they have used on their journey.
- Currently, the existing design requires people to cut through the center of the building to reach the bathroom. This impacts other uses of the center. New design should segregate the bathrooms away from other activities.
- We should not be designing a building for peak usage as it might be overdesign. Look at peak, moderate, and low usage times and then design what is reasonable.
- Having other programming in the Center helps with peak bathroom needs as it gives people something to do when waiting to use the bathroom, rather than focusing on the wait time.
- The “vending” area described is more of a hospitality area then a “vending” area. Perhaps should be reflected as a seating area.
- Should local eateries have an area to sell their goods as a way of attracting potential new customers?
- In what ways might we collect data from the people who use the Visitors Center? Consider ways other than staff to do so, especially during the peak tourist season.
- We should continue and enhance current efforts to cultivate cultural (local repeat) tourists.
- November – March there is a strong need for local, interactive programs.
- Each organization needs to see the others, including the Town efforts, as working to broaden offerings, not as competition. Places like Williamsburg that have multiple options for visitors have proven this concept.
- Contemplate to what extent there should be retail, programming, visitor information and/or services in the Visitors Center.
- The retail sales at the Chamber provides the income needed to staff the Visitors Center adequately.
- Our Visitors Center is unique in the industry in that it is open 362 days per year, closing only for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. The need is year-round as we have daily visitors, even when our attractions are closed.

- There should be a strong emphasis on providing information on things to do and see in Lexington and the region.
- Tickets to all attractions should be available for sale at this central point for visitors.
- What can do to help maximize the time tour buses spend in Lexington?
- Why are the key parking spaces on the Battle Green left for busses who don't allow their riders to shop in Lexington?
- Could we look at alternatives for tour busses that would force more time in the downtown?
- Visitor Center staff currently promotes all tour options and take great care to monitor the times so that they give the visitor a planned route that meets the tour starting times closest to when they come.
- Booking overnight accommodations should take place at the Visitors Center. Although not advertised, the staff already does this.
- There is a lack of understanding amongst all groups in the Tourism industry as to what the staff does at the Visitors Center, and the options the guests have and are offered.
- A self-serve kiosk should be included. Many prefer to self book. Could it also be combined with ticket sales and bookings? Would this help with peak times?
- On the exterior we should look at how furnishings to make the area a welcoming place to stop. How would this impact existing programming that takes place on the lawn?
- Consider the rear of the building and ways to make it more welcoming.
- Remember there is not one garden variety tourist. There are day-trippers from Boston, bicyclists, cultural, foreign, organized tour groups on a schedule, etc. We need to design a center to meet multiple types of tourists.

Appendix C

Visitors Center Programmatic Brainstorming Notes

March 27, 2012

The purpose of the session was to discuss the programmatic needs for the Visitors Center building, and to have some conversations regarding the role of the Visitors Center in the context of other offerings throughout the Town. Comments from all were recorded, whether or not there was agreement on those issues and are listed in no particular order. The comments can be categorized to several areas: adequate bathroom, design issues, tourism issues, cultural programs and how entities work together. Here are the points raised at the meeting:

- Year round visitors
- Is the Veteran's Space appropriately here? Merchandise? Copies of signed prints
- Is the programming space necessary? What is the purpose?
- Fire safety with the number of people
- CPA funding only covers renovation not new constitution
- ADA requirements – aggregate over 3 years
- Quantity of bathrooms – is it sufficient?
- Should we consider pay toilets?
- Accommodating volumes of visitors who come in different size groups
- Make sure we support small family groups
- See Visitors Center as information center
- Should we coordinate better?
- What role can the Depot play in the Visitors Services
- Should historic attractions be open year round? (Buckman Tavern is considering)
- Home schooling – weekend and off season
- Can't be everything to everyone
- What does everyone do best
- Needs a facelift
- Don't serve food there – Convenience store stuff
- How to get into 2022
 - Virtual tour
 - Self service
 - Think of technology incorporation
- Who pays for program
- How do we get the right type of stores in the town
- Understand the roles of each organization in the context of tourism to help guide design of VC
- How do we engage businesses in Visitors as customers – translate to Economic Dev.
- Is there agreement as to who the stakeholders are?
- George to bring groups leaders together for a pre-game huddle

Appendix D

VISITORS CENTER PROGRAMMATIC INPUT – LEXINGTON BUSINESSES

Thursday, January 31, 2013

Participants were provided with the Executive Summary and Conclusions from the 1/20/12 Programmatic Report. They were asked to comment specifically on whether the goals identified reflected their vision, as well as to list any programmatic needs that should be addressed. This meeting focused on the unique perspective of **Lexington businesses**. Comments from all were recorded, whether or not there was agreement on those issues. Although not all comments focused directly on the two questions, all points made are included. A list of attendees follows.

GOALS

- Food vending area - send into restaurant instead

PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS

- Restaurant menus in Visitors Center
- Need more space for info about businesses
- Visitors Center is used continuously
- Visitors Center hard to find
- Could use kiosk
- Finances of cost savings for meeting space
- Visitors Center is disrespected
- First impression at Visitors Center makes me sad
- Option 1 (renovating existing center) – waste of CPA funding
- Excited about video space

MISCELLANEOUS

- Limit of 2 hours for parking a problem
- Working with bus companies to keep visitors here longer
- Key Questions: Deal with all busses
- Parking and transportation study about to get underway
- Tour busses into Depot lot - consultant
- Understand use of Visitors Center
- Where is restaurant capacity for tour busses
- Visitors Center used to make referrals
- Visitors Center is not only tourists
- Hard to find
- Why is divide between Visitors Center and Historical Society
- Dark, dingy Visitors Center
- Depot is locked – should be something there
- People don't want ethnic food on visit, they want New England fare
- Freedom trail type markers
- How do we work together
- Need a concrete reason from Historical Society why visitors center would not be good
- Parking and transportation study about to begin

ATTENDEES: Ada Wong, Sandy Blanchet, George Burnell, Joe Pato, Mary Jo Bojart, Joel Berman, Karen Shaw, Jennifer Tang, Dawn McKenna, Denise Ricketts



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Appendix E

VISITORS CENTER PROGRAMMATIC INPUT

CHAMBER, HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND TOURISM COMMITTEE BOARDS

February 7, 2013

Participants were provided with the Executive Summary and Conclusions from the 1/20/12 Programmatic Report. They were asked to comment specifically on whether the goals identified reflected their vision, as well as to list any programmatic needs that should be addressed. The **Boards of the Chamber and Historical Society** as well as the **Tourism Committee** meeting participated in this meeting. Comments from all were recorded, whether or not there was agreement on those issues. Although not all comments focused directly on the two questions, all points made are included. A list of attendees follows.

GOALS:

- Closer collaboration distributing info between Chamber and Historical Society - Both Chamber and Historical Society
- Tourism Committee should be included in collaboration
- Majority of participants have taken Liberty Ride and Battle Green Tour and visited National Park/Concord
- Do a better job of connecting the dots
- Literature out there
- Improve layout for distribution of materials/improve format just map 8 ½ by 11/you are here format - PDF format availability
- Linger in Lexington
- Get people into community
- Peak interest with initial experience
- Like plan
- Bus Traffic - deal with large bus groups coming to Lexington to encourage to spend more dollars
- Goal – self- service info after hours
- Showcasing our history
- Broad goals - not necessarily

PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS:

- Need a space to show listening or visual tour
- Not too much staff in the Visitors Center
- Entice people to come into the community
- Program needed in off-season
- Complimentary vs. competition
- Work on doing that - not duplicate efforts
- “more is more”
- Synergy with Liberty Ride staff being at Visitors Center



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- Don't think Veteran's memorial is right vision - look at back
- How to handle opening needs of safety
- Educational room - need to agree on roles and responsibilities
- Change words inside regarding "programmatic needs"
- Accommodate people who need it
 - Seasons
 - Residents
 - Day trippers
 - Week long visitors
 - Family types of all kinds
- Remember it is a town building
- Tourists come in all different expectations
- Modernizing display more
- Public building - portal different info
- Can't be everything to everyone
- More women's bathrooms
- Multi- lingual brochures and kiosks
- Do some immediate changes
- Include recent veterans
- Calendar - Representation
- Reorder priorities of info programmatic
- Upgrade business space - why people come here
- Do we need enough bathrooms?
- Exterior opening of public restrooms – 24/7
- Opposing views

MISCELLANEOUS

- Selectmen concerned about safety issue
- One organization should not guide long-term planning.
- Movie of what we do here.
- How can we break down distrust from Historical Society
- Should broader history be included?
- Most important revolution
- Doesn't belong in Visitors Center

1. What does Chamber do well and what does Historical Society do well

- Dissemination of information
- Aggress with first goal
- 2nd goal expand to retention
- Not keeping in Visitors Center
- Peak interest not satisfaction

ATTENDEES: Ada Wong, Bill Mix, Barry Cunha, David Wells, Kevin McGuire, Susan Bennett, Susan O'Keefe, Paul Ross, Kerry Brandin, Richard Pagett, Lester Savage, Denise Ricketts, Mary Jo Bohart, George Burnell, Sharon Spaulding, Julie-Ann Shapiro, Trisha Kennealy, Dawn McKenna.



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Appendix F

VISITORS CENTER PROGRAMMATIC INPUT

GENERAL PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

February 12, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

Participants were provided with the Executive Summary and Conclusions from the 1/20/12 Programmatic Report. They were asked to comment specifically on whether the goals identified reflected their vision, as well as to list any programmatic needs that should be addressed. The **general public** participated in this meeting. Comments from all were recorded, whether or not there was agreement on those issues. Although not all comments focused directly on the two questions, all points made are included. A list of attendees follows.

GOALS:

- Need space to service visitors as they expect to be served
- Conflict between orientation and visitor services
- Need for orientation space
- Provide Chamber handicap accessibility
- Driving force should be exhibit space

PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS

- Serve those taking breaks
- Redo outside space
- Roof overhang over outdoor space
- DON'T TOUCH PURPLE BEECH - TOURISTS COME TO SEE
- Men's women's and HC restrooms
- Site survey money - make architect be real
- Consider exhibit designer integrated in design team
- Approach is important - exhibit space important (don't come through vending space)
- Not attractive - orient and motivate
- Need to have multiple ways to provide information
- Modernize technology
- Flag to indicate building open

MISCELLANEOUS

- Where to locate tour busses

ATTENDEES: Kerry Brandin, Pam Shadley, Masha Traber, S. Bijan Afshartous, Victoria
Buckley, Joe Rancatore, George Burnell, Pat Costello, Dawn McKenna



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